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THE CEA CRITIC

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WHAT KIND OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR STUDENTS OF LITERATURE?

Several years ago I administered a battery of tests to a character in literature—the first real attempt, to the best of my knowledge, to integrate phychology and literature. Paul, the character, from Willa Cather's short story "Paul's Case," turned out to be, not surprisingly, a schizophrenic. I "tested" Paul with the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory (known to psychologists as the MMPI), and on the basis of evidence in the story, dialogue and description, answered the questions in the inventory for Paul. I proved that Willa Cather knew what she was doing when she called Paul a "case."

But did I know what I was doing? I should, if I had followed the inspiration set by some literary students of psychology, have dealt with insights and concepts instead of with tests and measurements. But feeling restless with the paraphernalia of the traditional psychological approach to literature—borrowed from therapy and depth analysis designed to cure neuroses—I became "scientific."

I was no dilettante working out of my field. I was working within my two fields. A college teacher of English of some fifteen years experience, I was at the time also a matriculated graduate student of psychology in the laboratories of Columbia University (where psychology is classified as a pure science). My "masters" in the psychology department and my fellow graduate students looked upon me with some suspicion, for I had come from across the campus where English and literature were never subjected to laboratory verification. In time I subdued the suspicion of the scientists, only to arouse the gentle hostility of my colleagues in the English department. If I wanted to integrate psychology and literature, they said politely, I could read Freud and Erich Fromm, Karen Horney and Ernest Jones. What in the world was I doing in the dusty labs?

In the labs I was getting into trouble, for I mastered differential and integral calculus, probability calculus, neuro-anatomy, physiology, some electronics—all in order to express fairly obvious things in the sophisticated equations. And I found myself ready to take a second Ph.D.—this time

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LITERATURE AT THE INSTITUTE

It is remarkable that in an age of great change very little has been done to modify our inadequate doctoral programs in literature. Perhaps it is even more remarkable that in spite of their salient weaknesses the existing programs have adamantly resisted, and even ridiculed, efforts at reform. Some attempts have nonetheless been made, and notable progress has been recorded. This is the record of one such effort.

The Institute of the Liberal Arts was founded in 1952 at Emory University in Atlanta. As a community of scholars, it comprises faculty and students from the humanities and social sciences. Now the ILA, as it is called, is not an adjunct to a departmental program but a separate interdisciplinary program itself. Its stated purpose is to train scholars who can work across some of the arbitrary boundaries which now mark the humanities and social sciences. It does not try to supplant specialization but rather to make it meaningful by placing it on a cultural spectrum.

The faculty and students of ILA come from philosophy, history, English, classical and modern languages, theology, political science, art, and sociology. They believe they enjoy unique advantages by working and studying together, by considering common problems from varied standpoints. Depth, however, is not sacrificed for breadth, for the ILA requires the student to possess at least a master's degree in a subject field for entrance. In fact, many students have three degrees before enrolling, and many others have spent three or four years of full-time work in graduate school before becoming members of the Institute.

After matriculation the student begins a program which consists of two years of seminars and directed study plus the dissertation. Each program is handtailored

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Professor, How Long Should the Theme Be?

Reading and marking the first set of themes each new term, I realize anew that most freshmen have the same problem: they do not know how to develop their ideas. What is worse, many of them have no ideas, having been raised on such high school composition assignments as "What I Did Last Summer." Many students are unprepared for the greater intellectual depth expected of them in college. Students who did well in high school with breezy, superficial treatments of "My Last Job" are faced with assignments designed to make them think. Inevitably the first thought that comes to them is, How long should the theme be?

From the student's point of view, this is certainly a pertinent question. How long should the weekly theme in freshman English be? I have shrugged off this question by telling my students that I did not want to limit them; I did not want to constrict the development of their ideas by suggesting or imposing an arbitrary number of words; I did not want them to feel that a theme was merely a certain number of words and that when that number of words was reached a theme was written. A theme, I told them, should go to the end, and no further.

The big problem, of course, is to get the theme to go to the end in a logical, coherent, organized way. In the beginning this task seemed an impossible one. Students are often illogical. They are careless with language and will write without knowing what they write. They strive to be "effective," and fail completely to communicate. Often they slosh about in themes that should never have been attempted in the first place. If the themes are long enough, they are not solid enough. If a student has a good idea, he very often leaves it undeveloped, feeling that it is enough that he has had an idea. He feels that a string of sentences makes a theme. The result is that most student themes lack the solidity of full development.

Faced with the problem of making the students write well developed themes, I hit upon what I consider to be one good solution: during the first half of the semester I ignored theme assignments and concentrated on paragraph analysis. I reasoned that once the students knew how to outline their work and to write well-developed paragraphs, they could then write themes of five hundred, a thousand, or two thousand words with no effort at all.

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The CEA Bureau of Appointments will act as a clearing house for teachers wishing summer jobs and for colleges looking for summer teachers. Any CEA member, whether registered with the Bureau or not, who wants a summer job should let Al Madeira know of his availability; and department heads looking for summer teachers are also urged to get in touch with him. The address is Albert P. Madeira, Box 472, Amherst, Mass.

Harry T. Moore and Napier Wilt are speaking on April 26 at Urbana, Illinois, on the humanities and comparative literature. Harry T. Moore did a great deal of work on a D. H. Lawrence exhibition which opened April 1 at the Univ. of Southern Illinois. An 85-page catalog was prepared for the exhibition.

DOCTORAL STUDIES IN ENGLISH

If the CEA discussion of doctoral studies in English has settled anything, it is that some revision of such studies is long overdue. Most proposals that I have read urge more instruction at the doctoral level in linguistics and the problems of teaching composition, on the legitimate ground that beginning instructors are most immediately concerned with these matters, not with the teaching of literature at advanced levels. Even so, one requirement for the Ph.D.—"an original contribution to knowledge"—seems likely to stand and to continue, for some time, to be met mainly by "literary" rather than "linguistic" studies. This being the case, the nature of that requirement demands revaluation.

Surely few recent graduates would deny that the Ph. D. dissertation is all too frequently devoted to a minor figure who might profitably be forgotten—for all that he is supposed to "illumine" undercurrents in a certain period; to an analysis of trivial works because they might reveal a sub-sub-trend that has heretofore—thank God!—been neglected or undetected; to, in short, a search for "sublime discoveries upon the subject of flies and spittle" . . . largely because besides being "original" the "contribution" must be footnoted, apparatused, and above all—lengthy.

True, the candidate is told that mere length is neither sufficient nor significant, but length is nevertheless ultimately demanded, presumably on the ground that length of treatment suggests complexity and significance in the problem and thoroughness in its solution. And the would-be Ph. D. who can find no lengthy subject in a major figure or in reasonably meritorius non-major figures is forced into ground more barren than Miss Glasgow's.

And yet is this sensible? Do we adhere to such a rigid policy outside the Graduate School? Surely one article such as N. P. Stallknecht's "The Moral of the Ancient Mariner" (PMLA, 1932) or Marjorie Nicolson and Nora Mohler's "The Scientific Background of Swift's 'Voyage to Laputa'" (Annals of Science, 1937) is as valuable as all the longer studies of subminor trends and subzero authors, if not more so. To come to the point, should we not take a lesson from such articles as these? In short: If the demand be that the candidate for the Ph. D. make a fairly extensive original contribution to knowledge, why not give him the opportunity to produce several shorter studies as an acceptable (and accepted) alternative to the long, one-topic dissertation?

Such a plan offers several advantages. It might well encourage the selection of more vital subjects for investigation, because the candidate could work on a number of more significant projects, no one of which would meet the length requirements for the usual dissertation. As a result, our graduate departments of English might produce a considerably greater number of perceptive and important studies of worthwhile authors and works, and fewer imperceptive studies of minuscle authors, imperceptive because nothing is there to be perceived.

Further, such a plan might broaden the candidate's familiarity with literature by freeing him from an obsessively minute concern with an excessively limited area and encouraging him to channel his research energies into several areas of literature: he might be encouraged to look more deeply into not only the Lake District 1798-1801 but the early sonnets of Sidney and the later writings of Swift. This plan might equally well allow for an intensive study of one period or type; the several articles could discuss the works of the same period or the same genre, yet deal with different important problems that could not be covered in a unified dissertation of the conventional kind.

Someone may object that allowing a candidate to write, say, four different articles pertaining to four different areas of literature would encourage superficiality or demand even more work than present requirements do. Surely the second claim is no real objection! And as for both suggestions, obviously the graduate school or departmental authorities would evaluate and limit the proposed smaller problems and would determine, then as now, a particular candidate's qualifications for undertaking such a project. As I have said, I suggest this plan as an alternative to be used when it promises, as it can promise, more vitality and flexibility in an area of graduate English work that badly needs both.

W. U. McDonald, Jr.
University of Toledo

The spring meeting of the New England CEA will be at Connecticut College, New London, on Saturday, April 19. An excellent program has been planned.

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THE SAD STORY OF THE OLD SAILOR

Scene: **A college classroom full of sophomores taking the required second-year lit course. The Assistant Professor of English Literature is reciting without looking at the book.**

"Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

Yes, "Kubla Kahn" is a marvelous fragment, but Coleridge's **magnum opus** in the mood of wonder and magic is—

Coleridge's **what,** Professor? **(Anxiously from the back row.)**

Magnum opus—best work, greatest poem. It's a common term in literature and music. From Latin. **Opus,** "work." **Magnum,** "big, great."

Oh. Oh, think you.

Let's see—where was I? Oh, yes. Coleridge's **magnum opus (An understanding smile from the back row.)** is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Let's look first at its carefully worked out structure. It—

What page, Professor?

What? Oh, "The Ancient Mariner"? It begins on page 137. In the green book. **(Dutiful laughter.)**

Thanks.

Its structure—well, it is wrought of three intertwined strands. First is the—

What kind of strands, Professor? **(In the second row a hand waving knitting interrupts.)**

Intertwined. You know, twisted, twisted together—like your knitting. **(Laughter from the boys.)** Now, let's see—the first thread, the first strand of the structural pattern, is the ship's voyage, which is as factual as a captain's log. It forms an exact geograph—

Professor, what is it as factual as, please? **(From a deadening literal eye behind glasses.)**

Why, a captain's—

Log. Log! **(This comes booming from a navy veteran usually as taciturn as Davy Jones.)** The captain's daily record of the ship's speed, course, position, and all that. **(It is obviously something everybody ought to know.)**

Oh, **that** log. I thought . . . **(She trails bewildered off into silence, with "wood" barely audible.)**

Thank you, Mr. Woodring. That's exactly right. Well **(Looking at his watch.),** to get on . . . The **second** strand of structure is, as Wordsworth called it, the "spectral persecution" of the ancient mariner—that is, the revenge—

What was that, Professor? **What** kind of persecution?

Spectral. **(Carefully)** Spectral. **(No gleam cuts the darkness.)** You know, from specter—a spirit, a ghost, a spook. It's the adjective form, "pertaining to a specter, a spirit."

Oh, I see. Thanks.

That's all right. Now. Now, the second strand, then, is the revenge taken on the ancient mariner by the guardian spirits—or **specters**—of the Antarctic. This furnishes the supernatural motivation for the action and—

Excuse me, Professor, but did you say that **Wad**sworth called it that?

Called what, what, Miss Truehart? **(Owner of the fattest notebook in the class.)**

Did he call that second thing the "spectral persecution"?

Yes. Yes, **Word**sworth did. His name, you know, is **Word**sworth—William **Word**sworth—**W-O-R-D. Wad**sworth is the middle name of Longfellow—William—I mean **Henry** Wadsworth Longfellow, the American poet. But don't worry about the authorship of the phrase; it's not important. Neither is the phrase.

Well, I just wanted to know.

Of course, of course. Quite right. Well, now—where were we? **(Frowning at his watch)** The second thread of structure is the revenge-sequence, the persecution of the ancient mariner by the guardian spirits of the Antarctic. This is the supernatural level of the motivation, and makes it possible—

Professor, how do you spell "Anartic"?

With a **c** before the second **t.** As I was saying, the supernatural motivation is—

Before the **second t?**

That's right—before the **second t.**

But I only have one **t. (Superior laughter from those who think they can spell it; whispers of "What's so funny?" from the others.)**

Well, in that case I guess I'd better put it on the board. **(Does so.)** To continue, the spectral persecution provides the supernatural motivation for the action, and—

Sir—

Yes, Mr. Ferguson.

What were those spirits guarding? **(Something he has written evidently doesn't look right. A chronic mishearer.)**

What spirits?

Why, those "guarding" spirits you mentioned. **(Mr. Ferguson is just back from the army.)**

I think I said "guardian" spirits. Anyway, they do guard; they guard the Antarctic region and, I suppose, its animal inhabitants. Maybe the penguins. **(Penguins are always funny.)** As Coleridge says in the marginal gloss at line—let me see—at line 131, "they are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one." Well, we'd better get on. **(The watch is now beside the book.)** The **third** phase of the structure is the moral meaning, the level of allegorical significance. Here —

Where did Coleridge say that about the guardian spirits? Was it in the "marginal" something, Professor?

I think I said "marginal gloss." That's the usual phrase for the short notes in the margin explaining something in the text. A gloss, G-L-O-S-S, **(Spells it and writes it on the board.)** is a note of explanation; it comes from the Greek word for tongue, which in Latin—But we really must get on. Where was I? Uh—the moral allegory that runs through "The Ancient Mariner" is much more profound and inclusive than the moral tag the mariner leaves at the end about being kind to animals. The moral significance, very well interpreted by Lowes in his brilliant book **The Road to—**

Professor, I don't exactly think I know what an allegory is. **(There are more honest men than one thinks.)**

An allegory—well, an allegory is an extended metaphor, and a metaphor is—Perhaps an example would make it clearer. Take Bunyan's **Pilgrim's Progress.** There virtually every concrete physical action or incident has an abstract moral meaning. For example, when Christian—You've read **Pilgrim's Progress** of course, Mr. Swartz? No? Some of the **Faerie Queene** maybe? You know, Spenser's poem. No? How about Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark—" no—no, not that. Well, never mind. A metaphor is simply—**(The rest is cut off by the clamor of the bell. As he pockets his watch—noting almost unconsciously that the college clock is off again—the rich phrase for that mood of Romantic poetry of which "The Ancient Mariner" is the central joy passes and repasses with sad irony through his mind: "the renascence of wonder" . . . "the renascence of wonder.")**

Clyde A. Harding
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BREADTH AND DEPTH IN SCHOLARSHIP

Debates in academic circles have often centered around integrative courses, graduate and undergraduate, and have most often considered whether it was better to have breadth or depth, or the question of how much depth should be sacrificed to achieve breadth. The usual assumption has been that breadth and depth were antithetical, that one could be achieved only at the expense of the other.

Certainly, in a superficial sense, either one may be sacrificed for the sake of the other, and equally clearly, it is possible to have either one in some sense without the other. Many a survey course touches only the surface of a period, while many a seminar and many a thesis digs its way into single authors and single works, or even small fragments of the one or the other, without seeming awareness of relationships with the world that surrounded the author or the environment out of which the work grew.

Both Are Necessary

But this is not to say that depth and breadth are incapable of sharing the same classroom or the same cloistered study. Indeed, the two are not incompatible. No writer or thinker is very likely to have achieved significantly without having drawn heavily upon the culture of his age and, no less importantly in many cases, a thoroughgoing knowledge of the roots out of which that culture grew. Anatole France, in his **Vie Litteraire,** said:

"The fine periods of art have been epochs of harmony and tradition. They were organic. Not everything was left to the individual. Man, even a great man, is a small thing when he is quite alone. We do not adequately recognize that a writer, though he be very original, borrows more than he invents. The language which he speaks does not belong to him, the forms in which his thoughts flow: ode, comedy, tale, were not created by him; he does not possess in himself either syntax or prosody. His very thought has been breathed into him from all sides. He has received the colors; he brings to them only the nuances, which, I know, are infinitely precious. Let us be wise enough to recognize: our works are far from being from ourselves alone. They grow in us, but their roots are everywhere in the nourishing soil. Let us admit that we owe a great deal to the entire world, and that the public is our collaborator."

Implications for the Scholar

Anatole France was speaking as a writer and to other writers. But the implications are as important for the scholar as for the author. The scholar's knowledge and understanding of a creative artist can never attain depth without a knowledge of the roots, the nourishing soil, and indeed the culture in a very large sense, out of which the creative activity stemmed and which, in significant ways, it in turn reflects.

The scholarship "in depth," which treats an author without reference to anything but his own writing, may achieve a certain facsimile of true depth, but nothing very genuine. If the biography is added to the works, a little—indeed a very little—may be gained. To add, as is usually done, a basic knowledge of other writers who are contemporary brings a new dimension, but still is far from enough. The important writer is important in small part because he has mastered his forms, (that is a necessary beginning), but in large part because he has mastered the truly meaningful texture of his age, with its multiple ramifications and implications reaching out into the philosophy, history, social conditions, intellectual struggles, scientific achievements and perplexities, and indeed its less tangible but no less important hopes and fears, enthusiasms and disillusionments.

Man is a product of his culture, and this includes the creative thinker and artist. His culture is not divisible into separate disciplinary pigeon-holes without the loss of its texture, its total quality. A writer cannot be studied within a pigeon-hole any more satisfactorily than he could have lived in one. The scholar who confines himself to the pigeon-hole approach condemns himself to a narrowly limited view, such as it would be absurd to call truly a study in depth.

The Man and the Age

Just as an individual creative thinker grows out of, reflects and interprets his age, and needs to be studied in the context of that age, so the movements of thought and art in one age and one country depend upon preceding eras and related movements in other countries, and must be studied in the corresponding perspectives of time and geography. Wordsworth at best is only half comprehensible without the backdrop of the entire early romantic movement, and the history and philosophy of his age.

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But romanticism in England in turn is at best only in very small part comprehensible without the larger backdrop of the enlightenment in England and in Europe, or without the philosophical stirrings of Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, or without the rise of romanticism on the continent, or without the historical-political stirrings in England and on the continent.

The phrase "depth or breadth" implies alternatives that do not in reality exist beyond what must in some sense be superficial study. Truly significant depth comes only when intensive knowledge of a writer or thinker is coupled with enough awareness of the political-historical-intellectual-artistic environment so that that environment is seen as a whole and so that its very texture is felt as a reality. And this means breadth. But breadth, in turn, is meaningless unless it incorporates study in depth of the writers to reveal their own particular qualities, or, as Anatole France put it, the nuances which they have added, and with which they have turned the commonplace into something infinitely precious.

Depth Means Significance

A doctoral dissertation clearly must achieve depth. Too often, particularity is confused with depth. Thus one might conceivably do a definitive study of an author's use of adjectives and concern himself only with that author. But this is particularity and not depth, for it need represent no knowledge of either ideas or, in the larger sense, form, of the author's work; while conversely, a very full understanding of the writer's ideas and art can be achieved without the knowledge which such a thesis would contribute.

True depth can be gained only when the significance of the writer is probed. This, in turn, cannot be done very meaningfully without opening doors that will look out over the whole range of his era. In the thesis as in any other scholarly study, depth and breadth are not incompatible; they are and must be inseparable, for neither one can exist significantly without the other.

Kenneth Oliver
Occidental College

What Kind of Pshychology?

(Continued from p. 1)

my "thesis" must be a critical experiment, and I had to build the apparatus myself. I was becoming a psychologist!

Actually I became a maverick. The learned and sensitive colleagues in the MLA don't understand my kind of psychology, and the psychologists subsume literature under "verbal behavior." Professor B. F. Skinner of Harvard has said that poets are not sensible men. Their verbal behavior is not controlled by reality. They talk to the moon, and in general disport themselves as if on the ward.

To Professor Skinner, all speaking and writing, from the first "mama" of the infant, to the most intricate imagist poetry, is verbal behavior, and subject to the laws of all behavior. The implications are tremendous, for behavior, subject to lawful order, is raw datum for the psychologist's laboratory. Literature, thus, becomes legitimate material for the psychologist to study —and the tables are turned!

As a maverick, I began to measure the amount of information in poetry, using the intricate formulas of Bell telephone technicians. I studied the mathematical frequency of the emission of phonemes and other verbal units. Word lists were elementary stuff. I dreamed of being able to control, after first describing and predicting—like any good scientist—the verbal productions of any man. I measured "semantic differentials" (Hayakawa is child's play!) and noted latencies of response, intensities of verbalizations, and I never read a word of Freud, Jung, or Adler!

The point is made, if ever it can be made. Contemporary psychology has something exciting, and threatening too, to offer the student of literature, but it is far more than the strictly imaginative insights of Freud and his followers—insights which are only more literature.

It is possible that psychology—using the meaning which the word has for those of us who have really probed it today—may be about to absorb literature. I think not. I hope not. It has not absorbed me. It has heightened my understanding of verbal processes without destroying my joy in literature. Yet the discipline is slowly maturing, and this is no time to become patronizing toward it. Understanding of contemporary psychology can not be worked up in one course, or in a few summer months of casual reading. It is not merely a supplementary tool. It could engulf us with its final analysis of our literature as the non-sensible verbal productions of mad-men.

The zealous scientists working away in the labs of Columbia, Harvard and many other American universities often love and respect literature; yet as scientists they are beginning to "understand" us—and our love for literature.

I believe in fighting back with their own tools. It is possible to understand their methods, and their methods can help us to perfect our techniques of teaching, perhaps even of writing imaginatively, but meanwhile it's going to be a losing battle as long as we confuse real psychology with imaginative insights into the subconscious. Just as Freud left the soul for richer fields, the id and the super-ego, today's psychologist has left imagination and the subconscious for observable processes and intervenening variables.

Yes, it's possible that psychology may be helpful to the literary scholar, but beware, lest we merely become helpful to the phychologist while we are in the process of integrating the two fields.

John A. Weigel
Miami University

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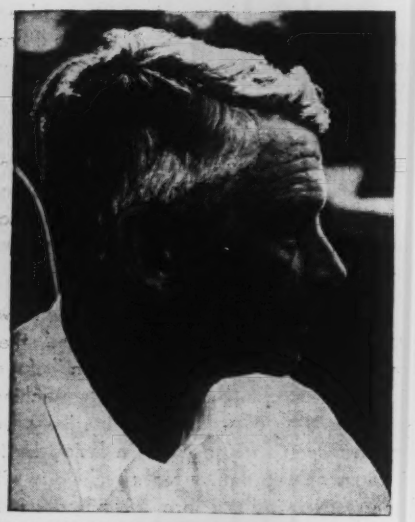

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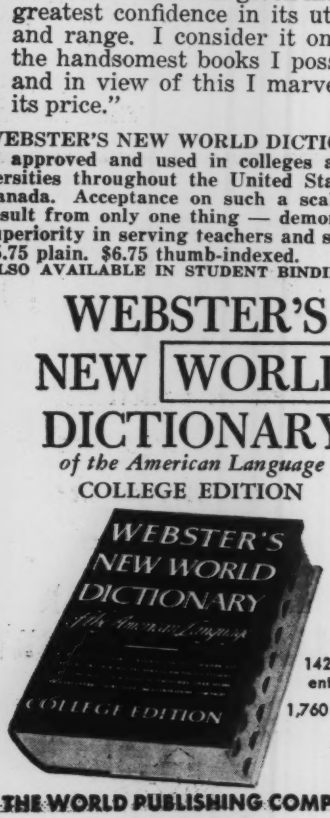

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How Long Should the Theme Be?
(Continued from p. 1)

Because the handbook we were using was weak in this area, I compiled a list of methods of paragraph development which I discussed in class; the text supplemented my lectures.

Students will think when they are challenged to do so. I found that making them define words or concepts that they had accepted most of their lives forced them to be crtiical and to evaluate. What do freedom, communism, democracy, liberal mean? To define adequately, they have to understand basic assumptions, logic, evidence, and so on. Definition is one way to restrict and to develop an idea; obverse iteration is another. Definition tells what a thing is; obverse iteration tells what it is not. The thing defined can then be compared to something the reader knows for similarities; it also can be contrasted for differences. Force and clarity can be obtained with repetition, with illustration or example, and with particulars and details.

After analysis in class of sample paragraphs, and discussion in class of such aspects of the paragraph as unity, coherence, point of view, and so on, the class is ready for a written paragraph assignment: three unrelated, unconnected paragraphs. One paragraph is a definition of an idea or ideal; the second is a description of a piece of furniture in the living room—something the student has seen every day of his life; the choice of the third I leave to the student. This assignment forces him to think about an abstract concept, to reevaluate and describe a commonplace item, and to do some original thinking in choosing a topic of his own. The student should note before each paragraph the techniques he is using. In this way he is kept aware of what he is doing and is forced to concentrate his attention on writing paragraphs in terms of specific techniques, e.g. comparison and contrast, obverse iteration, etc.

After the first written assignment we discuss the development of an idea or paragraph by an object's, or event's relationship to time, to space, and to what went before. These are temporal, spatial, and causal methods of development. After analysis of sample paragraphs in class, we are ready for a second assignment: three more unrelated paragraphs. To make the student think critically of the things about him, to sharpen his awareness, I assign a cause and effect paragraph that deals with some occurrence from his own life, or with some phenomenon of nature.

Such events out of nature as the change of the seasons, the ebb and flow of the tides, the growth and decay of life, are examples of what can be treated. The temporal method is generally sequential, the then . . . then . . . then kind of development. I warn the students not to look into their chemistry texts for the Bessemer or Hall or Frasch process; but they can pick something out of history. However, if they choose to write about the French Revolution, which they discussed in history class the day before, I insist that they approach it with a different point of view from either the text or the instructor. The Carlylean approach, for example, dealing with the characters of the historical drama, is a good approach to use: think of history as people or forces in action. Spatial development is generally descriptive: a room, a street, a house, a landmark. Where is it? What is the size, shape, and atmosphere? After this second written assignment, I assume that my students will know how to develop several types of paragraphs using any combination of methods to get the best results.

I began using this approach to theme writing two years ago. It was an attempt to get the students to develop their ideas more fully and also to make them think about things about them, things from their own lives. I have found that many freshmen have improved their theme writing be-

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cause of this kind of approach; their themes are more solid, more detailed, more fully thought out. Once they realize that they must think not in terms of single ideas, (sentences) but of the expansion and examination of these ideas, (paragraphs) the problems of structure and development are solved. And, from a practical point of view, students don't ask how long a theme should be any more; I just tell them to write six or eight or a dozen well developed paragraphs.

Myron Taube
New York University

Literature at the Institute
(Continued from p. 1)

and directed by an ILA committee. The required courses, which provide a core of unity in ILA, consist of systematic seminars in the Western tradition. Otherwise the student pursues his specialization. When he feels sufficiently prepared, he petitions the Institute for permission to attempt the comprehensive examinations, for no other examinations are given. If he passes, he immediately begins work on his dissertation. Two authorities from other universities, as well as the student's own committee, must approve the dissertation, and the entire faculty of the Institute must vote on accepting the student into the community of scholars before the doctorate may be awarded.

Students from philosophy, history, theology, and other fields are all enrolled in the Institute, but I feel the program is particularly rewarding to the student of literature. It is obvious that a knowledge of the liberal arts is prerequisite to the meaningful study of literature. For no discipline operates in a vacuum, and literature, as a reflection of life, must particularly be studied in connection with its cultural ethos. The teacher of literature, if he is adequate, must by definition also be a teacher of humanities. Unfortunately, however, several generations of American students have been reared to believe that the study of literature is little more than a mastery of dates and editions—the history of a literature, in short, all too often separated from its cultural context.

The Institute resolves this problem by emphasizing the continuous intellectual history of the Western tradition. It also trains the student in a methodology which is based no less on his own modes of value-perception than on the traditional methods of inquiry. The task is admittedly great. Yet a lesser effort tends to fall into the realm of the traditional program — one which is most often concerned with the part to the exclusion of the whole, one which in short practices specialization by amputation.

ILA methodology operates like circumstantial evidence in a court of law. Take for an example the student of romanticism who considers the philosophical, historical, and sciological aspects of his period in addition to the literary documents. Now if the student knows Fact A about the basic assumptions of the romantic worldview, if he sees how they operate in the history of the period as Fact B, if he realizes that these forces result in fundamental sociological changes as Fact C, then he brings new understanding to the study of romantic literature. Is it not true that any literary document must necessarily reflect its cultural ethos? If this is indeed true—and few would deny the validity of this assumption—then how can one student hope to understand literature without some comprehension of intellectual history? But the traditional program does not prepare the student in this way. Thus it becomes apparent that the traditional program, not the reform which ILA exemplifies, is under attack at this point.

Then if the goal of literary scholarship is only to have an accurate historical understanding, it follows that the ILA student is better equipped than his traditional colleague. Yet historical understanding is not everything, and here again ILA methodology prepares the student in a way the traditional program cannot. For it is naive to assume, as many traditional professors do, that the "proper appreciation" of literature depends on the student's knowledge of history or his ability to project himself into another worldview.

This notion is faulty on three counts. First, such projection is impossible because the student must remain himself and has drawn upon the literary and scientific contributions of succeeding eras. Second, the assumption that the original understanding is the most important discounts the factor of cultural growth and the accretion of interpretation. Third, the "contemporary reader" never existed in fact since there were many variations on the contemporary no less than on the modern scene. Hence the reader must bring to the literary document something else, something which historical scholarship cannot provide.

That something is of course **himself.** The student is concerned with his responses to the document as well as the document itself. Since each man occupies a different station on the spectrum of cultural experience, he brings different factors to bear in his appreciation of literature, and his "appreciation" is qualitatively unique. Now the student should use his modes of perception to interpret the document itself and the document in relation to himself; he must also formulate a judgment which is derived from a consideration of universal and his own particular values. Thus the student is, or at least should be, something of a philosopher.

Yet the traditional programs in literature are notably deficient in this respect. The student of literature has the reputation of being philosophically naive, and it would indeed be difficult for him, with his training, to be otherwise. It must nevertheless be recognized that his naivete is a grave flaw which should be corrected if literary study is ever to become meaningful.

Titles of Institute dissertations show the students' concern with both the historical and interpretive aspects of literary study: "Ethical Choice in Conrad"; "A Theory of Aesthetics"; "The Problem of Time in Proust"; "The Romantic Hero in France: A Cataclysm in Values"; "The Problem of Doubt in Contemporary Literature." In each instance the student must possess a degree of philosophical sophistication and a knowledge of intellectual history to handle his subject properly. Traditional programs have veered away from such topics not only because they are too

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(Continued from p. 7)

"broad" but also, and more importantly, because they demand a kind of training which the programs have failed to provide.

The Institute of Liberal Arts is admittedly experimental, and it is impossible to foretell its fate or that of similar programs. It is a new program which should obviate many of the dangers of "specialized" training while placing a specialization on the cultural spectrum. If it has erred at all, the program has demanded too much of its students, as the length of time necessary to acquire a degree amply illustrates.

Since ILA is well aware of the dangers of breadth, its rigor has surpassed that of most departmental programs. It is in fact attempting to achieve two goals: to train a scholar in a specialized field and to train him in intellectual history on the graduate level. The question arises, of course, whether or not the traditional subject department, if it so chose, could give similar training. The matter is complex and unresolved.

For the moment, at least, the Institute exists as a separate program — a small community of scholars who believe they can enjoy unique advantages and derive unique results by studying common problems from their varied standpoints. And perhaps this pooling of viewpoints represents an intellectual wealth which the subject department will never be able to offer.

George Ross Ridge
Georgia Institute of Technology

Thirteenth National Conference on Higher Education, Congress Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, March 2-5, 1958

At its recent national convention in Atlantic City, the AFL-CIO created quite a stir by charging that the NEA is in effect a company union. Since the Association for Higher Education, a department of the NEA, makes no pretense of representing college teachers, it might be considered a society for middle-management. The virtues and functions of AHE are largely determined by its almost exclusively administrative membership: guidance and admissions personnel, deans, and presidents of smaller colleges make up the "rank and file."

Functions of the AHE, aside from being a professional society for middle management, seem to be to develop knowledge in special areas, to help form administrative opinion, and to propagate both; these processes add up to formulating higher educational policy on a number of points. Talks, reports, minutes, summaries, and rosters are distributed very quickly in mimeographed form; a conferee may, without being a collector, depart from the conference with a 2-or 3-inch stack of such material, and eventually each registrant receives a volume of the proceedings, well edited and printed.

This emphasis on publication, on working and speaking for the record, coupled with the adoption of formal resolutions, would seem to give the AHE a quasi-legislative function. A further point of interest is that those who participate in formulating policy are also in operational positions to carry policy into practice. About one thousand college administrators attended the meetings.

Highlights of the conference for me were (1) a report by Don Shoemaker, Executive Director of the Southern Education Reporting Service, Nashville, Tennessee, "Developments in School Segregation-Desegregation,"; (2) Group 1, a discussion of the question, "Who should go to college and by what admissions techniques should such students be identified?"; and (3) the Annual Banquet.

In a lively discussion following the excellent factual report by Don Shoemaker, frequent reference was made to the "moderates" and their role in segregation-desegregation. A Negro college administrator offered this definition of a moderate: a gradualist at heart who knows that gradualism has usually meant standing still and doing nothing, yet he knows something must now be done. "He is a man who is scared as hell."

It seemed clear to the discussants in Group 1 that a major tactic in the battle of the enrollment bulge will be simply to reduce the bulge by enforcing higher entrance standards. The only questions pertained to ways and means of restricting admissions.

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